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Samuel Beckett's Pas Moi/Not I: pas traduction, not creation

Samuel Beckett's bilingualism has been the object of a number of studies in recent years (Friedman *et al.* 1987, Hill 1990, Beer 1994, Gordon 1996, Collinge 2000) and this relatively new field of enquiry has raised some important questions in relation both to Beckettian criticism and to literary theory. Among these, two seem of particular relevance: the impossibility to defend the idea of a definitive text, because of Beckett's self-revision in the process of staging his own plays; and the impossibility to grant the original work the value it usually has, because of his activity as self-translator. As Colin Duckworth already pointed out in 1966:

Beckett has translated (occasionally in collaboration) all his French works into English and his English ones into French with such complete command of style that only a bibliographical list will reveal the secret of which language any particular work was conceived in. (xvii)

In the thirty years or so that followed, Beckett's bilingualism developed even further and critics have become more conscious that knowing which is the original work does not necessarily entail the recognition of its greater value in comparison to the translated text. Especially in the case of his plays, this predilection for the original text cannot be automatic. Indeed it is more problematic than in the average source text/target text relation-

ship where the translator and the author are two different people. Modern views of translation as the re-creation of new texts (see: Derrida 1985, Bassnett 1993 and 1994, Venuti 1995, Ulrych and Bollettieri Bosinelli 1999) are helpful in the case of Beckett's translated plays not only because he was his own translator but also because his plays were usually published after they had already been performed in the first language. Granting more value to the texts edited in the first language, and evaluating their translation on the basis of their correctness, equivalence and adherence to the source texts, would mean not to take into due account the input that Beckett received from the performances of the plays and, in many cases, from his own work as a director.

The translation into French of *Not I*, for instance, was started after both the world and European premières, and we know that in the process of their rehearsal Beckett was worried about the difficulty of performing this astounding text, constructed as it is on the very edge of the dramatic genre (Fusella 1995: 131-45 and *passim*). The preparation of the world première under the direction of Alan Schneider posed numerous problems and a few days before it took place at the New York Lincoln Center on 22 November 1972, Beckett himself confessed that he was anxious to "find out if the new piece" was "theatre in spite of all" or could "be coaxed into it" (Knowlson 1997: 591). The same worry had evidently made him cautious about the publication of the English text, as in the month of August he had written: "With regard to publication, I prefer to hold it back for the sake of whatever light N.Y. & London rehearsals may shed. I have not yet sent the text to Faber" (Gontarski 1998: 8). Moreover the decision that Beckett would direct Billie Whitelaw at the Royal Court Theatre in London came out of a series of difficulties in the rehearsals: see Billie Whitelaw (1995: 116-130), James Knowlson (596-599) and Deidre Bair (1978: 623-630). The first proposal for the European première was in fact that the team would do *Not I* in a double bill, together with Albert Finney in *Krapp's Last Tape*, and that Beckett would only assist Antony Page in the direction of the plays. Instead, because of disagreement and tension during the first rehearsals, "it was decided that it

would be best if Page, although still remaining nominally as the director, were to leave the way more or less clear for Beckett to direct *Not I* and for Beckett to opt out of *Krapp's Last Tape*" (Knowlson 1997: 598).

Beckett's preoccupation with the staging aspects of this play is not surprising. *Not I* represents the beginning of a new phase in his career as a dramatist, a phase deeply influenced by his experience of writing for radio, television and cinema in the Sixties which had made him even more sensitive to the problems of translating script into performance. Moreover, like *Not I*, the other pieces he wrote in the Seventies are mainly constructed on the play between narrative and action and reveal a new interest in his experimentalism which can easily be summed up as the test of the limits and borders of literary genres; as E. Brater underlines in his study of Beckett's plays from *Not I* onwards:

To speak of Beckett's late style in the theater is to come to grips with the need for a new kind of critical vocabulary. Drama, narrative, and poetry, the conventional categories a literary tradition has imposed on chapter and verse, seem in this instance tangential and inconvenient. Genre is under stress. (1987: 3)

The composition of *Not I*, which according to Gontarski (1985: 131-49) can be traced back to the "Kilcool" fragment of 1963, had created for Beckett problems related to genre. As I have shown elsewhere (Fusella 1995: 3-35) he worked very thoroughly on the first version in order to make the action of the play more evident and to counterbalance the weight he had previously given to the protagonist's narration which is mainly in the past tense. The play, at the end of the composition process, stages a disembodied Mouth, "faintly lit from close-up" and an Auditor "fully faintly lit" and wearing a black djellaba which makes his sex "undeterminable" (Beckett 1973: 6).¹ Mouth chaotically narrates pieces of the sad, lonely and awful life of a certain She and of something that happened to her one April morning while she was wandering in a field. She interrupts her narrative 22 times in the middle of a sentence – always starting

¹ Hereafter the indication of page numbers for quotations from *Not I* refer to the 1973 Faber and Faber edition.

with "what?" – apparently to modify something she has just said but in fact only to make her narrative more chaotic and proceed with difficulty. Also, whereas at first she completes the sentences she has interrupted, at the end she doesn't, thus ensuring that her narrative does not come to a conclusion and that the interruptions overwhelm the story. Auditor has no lines and the only thing he does is to move his arms four times in a "gesture of helpless compassion". He does this while Mouth, who has just cried "... what? ... who? ... no! ... she!", "recovers from vehement refusal to relinquish third person" (16).

The action of the play, therefore, is Mouth's refusal to narrate her story in autobiographical form and her third person narrative makes the form she chooses coincide with the action of the play as she refuses to admit that the terrible events she narrates belong to her. Moreover, there are striking similarities between pieces of her monologue, belonging mainly to her interruptions, with the theatrical event and what the audience experiences. She says that "she found herself in the dark" and she and the public are in the dark; she recurrently speaks of a "buzzing" and/or a "dull roar" – that she located and locates first in her ear and later in her skull – which mirrors the aural experience of the audience; she is obsessed by a "ray of light" or "beam" "now bright ... now shrouded", "ferreting [and] poking around", "always the same spot", which describes the image of herself (faintly lit by a spot) that the audience receives in the dark of the stage and house. As Keir Elam has underlined:

Mouth, in effect, offers a clinical account of what she is currently having to go through in order to produce what the audience is currently receiving. [...] And in so doing she also describes – [...] metatheatrically – what the audience simultaneously sees on stage. (1986: 142)

This metatheatrical quality of Mouth's monologue not only creates a sort of contiguity between the character and the public, it also establishes a line of continuity between the narrated events and the present situation of Mouth. A situation which started on that April morning in the field, and is still lasting in the *nunc* of the performance, a situation made even more present by the fact that her narration gives way to the represen-

tation/dramatisation of the growing turmoil of the agitated mouth that is no longer able to continue with its story, but remains capable of refusing to say "I".

Even if the text is perfectly constructed to ensure that the narrative element doesn't jeopardize the theatrical value of the play, Beckett soon became conscious of the risk that the narrative of the protagonist would be granted undue importance and encourage the public to react mainly on the basis of the intellectual effort to understand the content of Mouth's story. At a meeting in Paris with the director and the actress who were to stage the world première – on the very first occasion in which he was describing his new play and circulating a few copies of the script – he was irritated by Jessica Tandy's asking what happened to the woman in the field and stated that he "was not unduly concerned with intelligibility", he hoped that his piece might "work on the nerves of the audience not on its intellect" (Bair: 625). And indeed the world première achieved this effect. Edith Oliver who reviewed it for *New Yorker* wrote:

Not I [...] is an aural mosaic of words, which come pell-mell but not always helter-skelter, and [...] once it is over, a life, emotions, and a state of mind have been made manifest, with a literally stunning impact upon the audience. Even then, much of the play remains, and should remain, mysterious and shadowy. [...] The words never stop coming, and their speed never slackens; they are, we finally realize, the pent-up words of a lifetime, and they are more than the woman can control. [...] Something of great power and vividness – tatters of incidents and feelings, not a story but something – comes through from a dementia that is composed of grief and confusion. (1972: 124)

On the other hand Oliver candidly admitted: "I have no idea what the title means", and described Auditor in the following way: "All the while, a man in monk's garb has been standing in the shadows, listening and occasionally bowing his head" (*ibid.*). It is evident, from these last two statements, that the close relationship between the narrated events and the narrating Mouth is not grasped and that Auditor's movement, whose helpless compassion is described by Beckett in a note to the text and should be conveyed by the "raising of arms from sides and their falling back" (16), was missed altogether.

However, these two aspects of *Not I* were understood on the occasion of the European première at least by the reviewer Benedict Nightingale. Writing in the *New Statesman*, after underlining the emotional effects of this "unusually painful" play – "tearing into you like a grappling iron and dragging you after it, with or without your leave" – he looks at it from the point of view of intelligibility and adds:

The mouth [...] pants and gasps out the tale of the character to whom it belongs [...]. It is a performance of sustained intensity [...]. But it must be admitted that the breathless pace combines with the incoherence of the character's thoughts to make the piece hard to follow; which is why I'd suggest either that it be played twice a session (though this might prove too much even for Miss Whitelaw's athletic throat), or that spectators should first buy and con the script, which Faber is publishing this week at 40 p. (1973: 135)

Thanks to the help of the script, then, Nightingale is able to link Mouth to the tale correctly and to suggest his interpretation for the title and action of the play:

[...] could it be, as some suspect, that the mouth is talking, not of itself, but of someone else? I don't think so. True, the story is told entirely in the third person, and the play is baldly called 'Not I'. But Beckett helpfully provides a stage direction which seems to explain that. At key moments, the speaker repeats with rising horror, "What? Who? No *SHE*": which is, we're told, a "vehement refusal to relinquish third person". In other words, she can't bring herself to utter the word "I", and that, I'd suggest, is because she dare not admit that this wilderness of a life is hers and hers alone. (136)

Personally I don't believe that the audience of *Not I* should be invited to read the script before going to the theatre as I think that the play is sufficiently well constructed to act "on the nerves" of the spectators and make them react as they should to Mouth's four cries (see Fusella: 159-162). In fact, it is not necessary to piece together the bits and pieces of her tale in an organic whole, nor is it important to understand all the sad events that have built up her terrible existence. What counts in the playhouse is the frustration the audience feels while trying to understand what Mouth is saying. There are elements within the

text designed to point the audience in the right direction: the repetitions which ensure that certain key items are picked up by the audience; Mouth's questioning tone embodied in the twenty-two interruptions and made evident by the interrogative pronoun "what?", which gives rhythm to her logorrea and shows her endless effort to express something she doesn't even know; the repetition of the only lines in which she apparently has no doubts at all about what she is saying – the cry "No!... shel". Still one has to account for the inability of the first reviewer to explain the title of the play and for the tentative way in which the second needs the help of the script to provide his own interpretation.

The fact that two professional drama critics failed to understand the action of the play in the theatre raises questions, and I suggest that Beckett was influenced by this when he translated *Not I* into French. Even if he had stated that he was not unduly concerned with intelligibility, as a dramatist he must have been interested in the intelligibility of the 'action' of the play. His playing with genre and his construction of the piece on the deferring play between the constitutive elements of what the History of Genre has defined as narrative and drama, *histoire* and *discours*, *mimesis* and *diagesis*, must not affect the essential core of what he wanted to be a *theatrical piece*, *performed* and *directed* in the theatre, *played by actors*, *viewed by an audience*. His English text must have appeared to him perfectly balanced, otherwise he would have not arranged performances. Still – as I have already pointed out – he was not sure that directors, actors and public would react to this work as he hoped, i.e. in a way similar to his own experience in front of his newly accomplished text. Besides, the reviews to the two premières must have made him realize the gap between the impact of the play as he had anticipated it and that perceived by the average theatre-goer.

The first London night was on 16 January 1973 and on the 18th Beckett went back to Paris where forty days later he began his first attempt at translating *Not I* into French. The three manuscripts of *Pas moi*, kept in the Reading University's Beckett Archive (with classmarks MS 1396/4/25, 26 and 27), provide evidence of the different stages of Beckett's translation. The first

two are holographs whereas the third is a typescript with holograph corrections and additions. Beckett started on 1 March '73 and by the 13th had done almost half of the translation. On this same day he carried on his work for a few more pages but then interrupted the translation and left it for a good year. When, on 2 May '74, he resumed his work he abandoned the first holograph altogether and made a fresh start which allowed him to complete his translation in ten days only. A week later, on the 19th, he translated the stage directions and the note on Auditor's movement. To sum up: manuscript 1396/4/26 is a complete draft of the translation, stage direction and note included; manuscript 1396/4/25 is the abandoned first translation of almost two thirds of the text, stage directions and note excluded; manuscript 1396/4/27 is the typed version and final manuscript which differs from the edited translation only slightly if one takes into consideration Beckett's holograph corrections to it.

The most striking difference between his first and second versions is in the use of tenses. Whereas in ms. 25 Beckett translates the English past tenses with the equivalent French past (the *imparfait*, the *passé simple* and the *plus-que-parfait* of the *indicatif*, and the *conditionnel passé*), from ms. 26 onwards he makes the radical choice of making Mouth tell her story in the present tense. A quick comparison between the introductory lines to the different phases of the narration of the April event by Mouth and Bouche will easily demonstrate the different quality of the two monologues:

- 1) ... nothing of any note till coming up [...] to seventy [...] wandering in a field [...] looking aimlessly for cowslips ... to make a ball [...] when suddenly ... gradually ... all went out [...] and she found herself in the [...] dark (7)
 ...histoire banale donc... jusque sur le tard... bientôt [...] soixante-dix [...] un jour qu'elle traînait dans une prairie... cherchant vaguement des cocous... pour en faire une couronne [...] quand soudain... peu à peu... tout s'éteint [...] et la voilà dans le [...] noir... (Beckett 1974: 82)²

² My quotations are from Les Éditions de Minuit's small volume containing *Oh les beaux jours* and *Pas moi* published in 1974; *Pas moi* is on pp. 79-95.

2) ... first thought was ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... she was being punished ... for her sins (7)

... première chose donc l'idée... oh bien après... brusque illumination... que la voilà punie... en voie d'être punie... (83)

3) ... this thought dismissed ... as she suddenly realized ... gradually realized ... she was not suffering ... (7-8)

... l'idée chassée... comme bêtise... dès qu'elle se rend compte... soudain... peu à peu... qu'elle ne souffre pas... (83)

4) ... this other thought then ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... very foolish really but so like her ... in a way ... that she might do well to ... groan (8-9)

... cette autre idée donc... oh bien après... brusque illumination... tout aussi bête au fond mais tellement elle... en un sens... l'idée qu'elle ferait peut-être bien de... de gémir... (85)

5) ... when suddenly ... gradually ... she [...] realized ... words were coming (10)

... quand soudain elle... [... the missing translation of "gradually" is in the text] sent venir des... des mots... (86)

6) ... when suddenly she felt ... gradually she felt ... her lips moving (11)

... quand soudain elle sent... peu à peu elle sent... ses lèvres remuer... (88)

7) ... but this other awful thought ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... even more awful if possible ... that feeling was coming back (11)

... mais avec ça encore une... encore une idée... effrayante... oh bien après... brusque illumination... encore plus effrayante si possible... que la sensation revient... (88)

8) ... then thinking ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... it can't go on (11)

... puis se disant... oh bien après... brusque illumination... ça ne peut pas durer... (88)

9) ... then thinking ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... perhaps something she had to ... had to ... tell ... could that be it? (13)

... puis l'idée... oh bien après... brusque illumination... si c'était quelque chose qu'il faut qu'elle... qu'il faut qu'elle... dise... si c'était ça... (91-92)

The use of the present tense in the French gives Bouche's narrative a different weight within the structure of the text. That the tense used is the narrative present is clear from the first quotation. Beckett underlines that Bouche's words are conveying an "histoire" and that the April event started "un jour qu'elle traînait dans une prairie" and it is interesting to notice that the former is absent in the English version and the latter has an *imparfait* that translates a present participle or a past continuous tense deprived of the auxiliary "(was) walking". However, Bouche's "histoire" becomes soon a way of describing her present situation and, despite the immediacy of the use of the narrative present, the shift in tenses makes her narrative paradoxically less immediate than Mouth's, while heightening the metatheatrical function of the monologue. This becomes evident if we look at quotation 8 above. In the English text the present verb form "it can't go on" may be justified as a free-direct thought of the character of the story. This present tense starts a whole segment of Mouth's narrative, which occupies two full pages of the text, where the speaker mixes up the present and the past and where the present tense progressively looses its justification as a direct thought of the character of the story and becomes a means of voicing the thoughts of the protagonist on the stage and of describing some aspects of her present situation. In *Not I* it is only at this point that Mouth's language starts to have a clear metatheatrical function, because up until then the dominant element has been the relating of her story. Instead, the French version of the same quotation does not differ from the previous introductory sentences to Bouche's story as they are all in the present tense; therefore, even if Beckett ensures that throughout her monologue Bouche also refers to the past, the eighth section of her story does not mark a metatheatrical turn in her narrative. The nine quotations are exemplary of the quantitative and qualitative difference of the past and present tenses in the two texts and, also, of their different structure. The French quotation 9 shows that Bouche's narration becomes more chaotic as the sentence mixes the *imparfait* ("si c'était quelque chose", "si c'était ça") with the *présent* ("qu'il faut qu'elle dise"), thus underlining a different stage in the perform-

ance, but the impact of this change is obviously less strong than that introduced by the eighth section in the English text.

It is not my concern here to convalidate the translation universals identified in the field of corpus linguistics investigating the nature of Translation, nor do I subscribe easily to universals in general, but Beckett's use of the present tense in *Pas moi* seems to fall into one of the categories identified by Baker (1996) to describe the basic rules of the translation process. In his contribution to Somer's volume, Baker proposes four universals: explicitation, simplification, normalization and leveling out. According to this theory, all translators tend to uncover what is not fully expressed in the source-text and to simplify its language and/or content. The first two universals certainly seem to be at work in Beckett's translation of *Not I* and the quotations from *Pas moi* I have just examined show how Bouche's *Mory* coincides with her present situation in a more explicit way than Mouth's, exhibiting its metatheatrical quality clearly from the beginning of the performance. In this way, the French text loses in part what, in the English text, is the clear initial narrative intention of the protagonist and the following shift into the description of her present situation. To put it differently, it stresses at a lower degree the progressive erosion of the story and its slow conversion into the performance of her increased confusion. That is to say that the explicitation of the metatheatrical quality in the target-text language implies also the simplification of the structure which governs the source-text and this in its turn implies, to a certain extent, the simplification of Bouche's language, at least as far as the verbal forms are concerned. An example of this process of simplification of the structure and language of the source-text might be the comparison between the first and last description of the "buzzing and the beam" which obsess and obsessed Mouth, with the correspondent descriptions of "le bourdon et le rayon" provided by Bouche:

Mouth (my bold)

she! ... (pause and movement I) . found herself in the dark ...
and if not exactly ... insentient . insentient for she could
still hear the buzzing ... so-called . in the ears ... and a ray of
light came and went . came and went ... such as the moon

might cast drifting in and out of cloud . . . but so dulled .
 feeling . feeling so dulled . she ~~did not know~~ what position
 she was in imagine! ... what position she was in! (7)

whole body like gone just the mouth like maddened
 so on keep - . what? .. the buzzing? yes all the time
 the buzzing . dull roar like falls . in the skull .. and the
 beam poking around .. painless .. so far ha! . so far . .
 all that . keep on .. not knowing what what she was -
 what? who? ... no! .. she! ... SHE I ... (pause) what she
 was trying what to try no matter keep on (curtain
 starts down) (15)

The use of the past tense in the first quotation is evidence of Mouth's attempt to narrate the April event and indeed in the English text she succeeds in telling her story with a coherent use of the past tense for quite a long time (i.e. until the beginning of section eight discussed above). On the contrary, at the end of her monologue – the second quotation – she uses verbal forms deprived of the auxiliary thus avoiding clear temporal connotations. Her attempt to recount her story has been abandoned by now and Mouth formulates disordered hypotheses about the past event and the present. In fact, in the only case in which she does use the auxiliary ("what she was – [. . .] what she was trying") she follows it with the expression of the same concept in the present ("what to try"). Moreover, whereas in the first quotation the description of the buzzing and the beam is clearly part of the narrated event and the buzzing is identified as having started before the April event (thanks to the use of "suff"), in the second, this bothers Mouth "all the time" and the whole description is part of an interruption. Like all other interruptions, this is conveyed in a language that contrasts with that of the narrative and is openly related to Mouth's present confusion. All interruptions in the text underline the fact that she has forgotten to mention something and have the function of contrasting the "voice" of the narrator with the narration itself, the context of utterance with the context of the narrated events; the present of the *discours* with the past of the *histoire*. Taken together the two passages exhibit completely different qualities. from Mouth's narrative to the performance of her confusion; from the use of

the past tense to the use of incomplete verbal forms; from the single temporal level of the past to its coexistence with the present.

Beckett's final translation of these passages is as follows:

Bouche (my bold)

elle! (*pause et premier geste*) la voilà dans le .. le noir et
 sinon exactement privée de sentiment non. car elle en-
 tend toujours le bourdon sordisant dans l'oreille. et un
 rayon va et vient. va et vient... tel un rayon de lune à cache-
 cache dans les nuages mais si engourdi le corps le corps si
 engourdi à ne pas savoir comment il se tient. imaginez ! ,
 comment il se tient !... (83).

tout le corps comme en allé .. rien que la bouche comme
 folie ainsi de suite . pas — ... quoi?... le bourdon?... oui...
 tout le temps le bourdon grondement de cataracte dans le
 crâne. et le rayon foretant. sans douleur jusque-là .
 ha!.. jusque-là tout ça . pas lâcher... ne sachant ce que
 c'est ce que c'est qu'elle . . quoi?... qui? non ELLE!
 (*pause sans geste*). ce que c'est qu'elle essaie ce que c'est
 qu'il faut essayer .. n'importe . pas lâcher (*le rideau commence
 à baisser*) (94)

Here, instead, the use of the present tense identifies "le bourdon et le rayon" more as components of Bouche's present situation than as elements of the narrated events. In the first quotation, the use of "toujours" together with the present tense expresses the continuity of the action from the past but fails to express that the "bourdon" is anterior to April. In addition, "toujours" stresses the idea of continuity in a conception of undivided and total time, thus anticipating "tout le temps" of the last quotation which also in the source-text is "all the time" but is used in contrast to the initial "still". In the second quotation, even if "jusque-là" (instead of "jusqu'ici" or "jusqu'à présent") tries to convey the idea of the past, Bouche's attempt to keep on trying is expressed only in the present. She says that she doesn't know "ce que c'est qu'elle essaie . . ce que c'est qu'il faut essayer", whereas Mouth ends by saying that she doesn't know what she was trying and what to try. It is also interesting to notice that this hypothesis of Bouche's recalls the previous one on

which I commented earlier ("quelque chose { . } qu'il faut qu'elle... dise .. si c'était ça") and that Beckett now drops even the use of "si c'était ça". On the whole then, the target-text flattens the temporal levels of the source-text and its juxtaposition of the time of the *énoncé* and the time of the *énonciation*. The choice to use the present tense from the beginning, albeit narrative, makes Beckett progress to the use of the same tense accompanied by scanty references to the past and then on to the present tense *only* at the end of the text, whereas in the source-text he had progressed from a predominance of the past tense to a mixture of the present and the past and on to the predominance of the present.

However this simplification of the structure and verbal forms of the play does not entail the simplification of its language *tout court*, or at least not to such an extent as to justify the hypothesis that this aspect of Baker's second universal affects *Par moi*. Even if, for example, the infinitive is the dominant verb form used by Bouche (it recurs almost a hundred times) and this could appear as a simplification of Mouth's language (who uses the gerund/present participle, the simple past and the infinitive almost in identical quantities) it is not possible to ascribe these differences to a process of simplification of the translation process. Not only do the verb systems of the two languages differ thoroughly from each other, not only did Beckett need to preserve the telegraphic style of the character's disrupted language, he also had to ensure that it would worsen with the progression of her monologue and be satisfied with its prosodic aspect. That he succeeded in the first task must have already been noticed from all the quotations I have provided so far. In addition, the two passages on the "bourdon" and "rayon" I have just examined are a good example of Bouche's increased disruption as the second quotation exhibits, like the corresponding English passage, a more telegraphic quality through the generalized absence of inflected verb forms and the increased number of uncompleted sentences.

I do not have space here to analyze all the linguistic aspects of the target-text but a brief exemplification of Beckett's extreme care in preserving the telegraphic and prosodic aspects of

the protagonist's language seems to me necessary. In fact it is my impression that even the use of the present tense that I have so far discussed could be justified on the basis of his interest in prosody. The fact that the third person of the *imparfait* and the *passé simple* in French is always stressed on the last syllable and that French itself has so many words stressed in the same way³ may very well be one of the reasons why Beckett decided to dismiss his first attempt of translating the play keeping the original past tenses. Moreover, if we follow his translation process we can see how determined he was in retaining the telegraphic quality of Mouth's language and the rhythm of the text, both crucial elements in the highly concentrated aural effect the play has on its audience. Compare for instance the following five versions of the same passage (my bold), noting that in the first French manuscript the author made two different attempts.

English edited text.

then dismissed as foolish . oh long after . this thought dismissed as she suddenly realized . gradually realized she was not suffering (imagine!) not suffering! indeed could not remember off-hand . when she had suffered less unless of course she was meant to be suffering ha! thought to be suffering . just as the odd time . in her life when clearly intended to be having pleasure she was in fact .. having none (7-8)

French first manuscript: first attempt then deleted (quoted without the internal cancellations and rewritings)

puis la rejeta comme sottise . oh long temps après . cette idée comme sottise ayant soudain compris . peu à peu compris qu'elle ne souffrait pas. . rendez-vous compte* ne souffrait pas! tel point qu'elle ne pouvait se rappeler avoir jamais si peu souffert . à moins bien sûr qu'elle ne fut sensée souffrir supposée souffrir . tout comme dans la vie déjà deux trois fois alors qu'elle aurait [undeciphered word] fallu . toute évidence éprouver du plaisir . elle n'en éprouvait aucun

³ "On sait les lois générales d'émission et de perception de la phrase française, et que tout mot non proclitique ou enclitique, c'est à dire non appuyé phonétiquement sur le suivant ou le précédent, porte un *accent* sur sa dernière voyelle, ou sur l'avant-dernière si la dernière est muette" (Mézaeyrat 1974: 12).

French first manuscript: second attempt (quoted as above)

puis la rejeta comme bêteuse oh long temps après cette idée
comme bêteuse ayant tout à coup compris peu à peu com-
pris.. qu'elle ne souffrait pas., rendez-vous compte . ne souf-
frait pas. tel point qu'elle ne put se rappeler... avoir jamais si
peu souffert à moins bien sûr qu'elle ne fut... ~~çensée~~ souf-
frir... ha!... supposée souffrir tout comme dans sa vie déjà
deux trois fois. alors qu'il lui aurait fallu toute évidence .
éprouver du plaisir en fait elle n'en éprouvait aucun

French second manuscript (quoted as above)

puis chassée.. l'idée chassée oh longtemps après. chassée
comme beuse quand elle se rend compte .. soudain.. peu à
peu qu'elle ne souffre pas. imaginez! ne souffre pas! tel
point qu'elle ne peut se rappeler comme ça au débotté
avoir jamais si peu souffert à moins bien sûr qu'elle ne soit
çensée souffrir . ha! supposée souffrir. . tout comme de son
vivant deux trois fois déjà alors qu'elle était présumée
[two undeciphered words] éprouver du plaisir. . elle n'en
éprouvait aucun

French typescript

puis chassée.. l'idée chassée... comme [deleted] en tant que
[interlinear correction and deleted] comme [added in the
margin] beuse .. comme [deleted] dès qu' [interlinear correc-
tion] elle se rend compte. [followed by translation identical to
the second manuscript with the exception of the two un-
deciphered words that here are substituted by "visiblement"
deleted and corrected with "toute évidence"]

French edited text:

puis chassée . l'idée chassée . comme bêteuse dès qu'elle se
rend compte . soudain . peu à peu . qu'elle ne souffre pas.
imaginez! ne souffre pas! tel point qu'elle ne peut se rappé-
ler... comme ça... au débotté... avoir jamais si peu souffert. à
moins bien sûr qu'elle ne soit . ~~çensée~~ souffrir ha! ~~supposée~~
souffrir .. tout comme de son vivant. . deux trois fois déjà...
alors qu'elle était présumée. . toute évidence... éprouver du
plaisir. elle n'en éprouvait aucun (83-84)

The more telegraphic style from the second manuscript on-
wards, thanks also to the use of the present tense, needs no com-
mentary. This is again made evident – in the final version – by

Beckett's decision to drop "oh long temps après" altogether and his substitution of "en tant que" with "comme" and of "comme" with "dès". The different choices for translating "suddenly" and the introduction of "comme ça" and "au débotté" in the second manuscript reveal his attention to prosody. In the first manuscript the changes from "soudain" and "pouvait" to "tout à coup" and "put" ensure the introduction of words with different stress and syllable patterns. "Put" interrupts the sequence of the iambic *imparfaits* of the previous sentences and "tout à coup" interrupts the sequence of three iambic words in the same sentence. In the second manuscript, where the use of the present tense diminishes the presence of words with the stress on the last syllable, Beckett isolates "soudain" and makes it follow a sentence with no iambs and formed by monosyllables only. As a matter of fact "soudain. peu à peu" has the same syllabic quantity ($5=2+3$) as the previous sentence ("dès qu'elle se rend compte" $5=1+4$) and this happens again with "comme ça... au débotté" ($6=2+4$) and the sentence which comes before them and after a caesura ("tel point// qu'elle ne peut se rappeler" $8=2$ caesura $+6=3+3$). Considering the syllabic quantity of Bouche's language segments, the passage reveals its structure: $11+5+5+11///8+2+4+8///18+6+5+18///7$.

Pas moi, therefore, does not simplify the language of the source-text even if it makes its metatheatrical quality explicit and thus simplifies its structure. That it does not show the other two universals of the translation process should not surprise us. The play relies so heavily on the disrupted language of the protagonist that trying to ascertain if it is "normalized" or "levelled out" would be an inappropriate exercise.⁴

⁴ According to Baker's already quoted text *normalization* is a form of *convention* as translators tend to exaggerate typical aspects of the target language. This type of exaggeration characterizes both Mouth's and Bouche's language and indeed is an important element of the play. Critics of *Not I* have already underlined the wide use of repetition, predilection words and filler words which make Mouth's language similar to that of people affected by aphasia, dementia or other psychic disturbances, therefore an inquiry into the *normalization* of the target text seems inappropriate. I believe that *levelling out*, that is the tendency of translated texts to flatten the differences between the written and spoken modes of the target language, is inapplicable in the case of the

Now, how should we account for the simplification and explicitness of this target text? Should we not weigh them against the evidence we have from the first manuscript that the translator *consciously* decided to opt out of the use of the past tense and chose the present tense? Can we really label this choice as "free" and "radical"? Are we inclined to justify it in the light of those theories that view translations as the re-creation of new texts and grant the target text its own autonomy and originality? I could certainly reply that *Pas moi*, like all other Beckett's translations of his own work, is an "authored" version and therefore not a translation at all and this would exempt me from answering these questions. But, as Ann Beer has pointed out, this would be "a leap of faith, judgment, or necessity, that has curious consequences both for the reading(s) of Beckett now possible, and for broader issues of theoretical debate" (210). The existence of *Pas moi/Not I* makes the transtextual reading an obligation for the critic who must take into due account the extreme complexity of the play (both in the target and source texts), a complexity which derives from the few theatrical elements on which it is constructed and from the excellent way in which the author/translator uses them.

Evidence of the strict logic which governs the constitutive elements of the play is easily provided by one of the English manuscripts of *Not I*. In fact, when Beckett created it, he felt the need to write an "Analysis" of what he had already written in order to identify those aspects of the text that left him dissatisfied or uncertain and in order to make the necessary corrections. This manuscript – that the author wrote after the second typescript of the play and before the next four typed versions (see Fusella 1995: 10-19) – is extremely interesting and I am convinced that it should be consulted by anyone considering translating *Not I*. The role played by language in this play is crucial and its theatrical value depends almost entirely on it. It is for this reason that translating it is such a difficult task. In order to understand how

translation of theatrical works. In fact, their difference from literary texts calls into question a whole series of different aspects to be considered during the translation process and which are still being investigated in translation theory (see Bennett 1995: 150-167).

"free" and "radical" Beckett's choice of using the present tense was, we have to examine further this intertextual reading of the two authored versions and try to understand how Beckett managed to compensate his choice with other changes within the strict organization of the play "Analysis" is organized in fourteen sections introduced by key words identifying the constitutive elements of the monologue and I will give one significant example. "so far"; this is the transcription of the corresponding section of "Analysis":

so far with ref. to no pain from beam + other
extension of feeling – amplify

This note refers to another key word, "beam", and both refer to "insentience" through the mention of elements related to feeling and sensations:

beam from beginning – moon image – moon
denied – just part of punishment –
but painless – so far – same spot at
first (not [erasure] made clear [interlinear ad-
dition]) – then flickering
(analogy with thought) – ferreting –
pain beginning (not made clear)

insentience first total – doesn't know what position
she's in – only eyelids moving since ray
disappears – this mentioned with memory
of field – then lips moving and whole
speaking apparatus – [...] fear lest this extend
to whole
frame unfounded so far

The interrelation among the various elements of *Not I* is already evident from these three key words and indeed I could continue quoting from other sections of "Analysis" in order to complete their cross-references. For instance, "punishment/suffering" is a cross reference of "beam", and this in turn refers on

to "voice", "buzzing" and "brain", and each of these would refer either back to one of the previous elements or to a new one. It is because of this type of interconnecting complexity that translating *Not I* is a very difficult task, where changing one thing creates a series of consequences of unusual intricacy.

"Analysis" shows that "so far" is always used with reference to "beam" and the speaker's fear of suffering, and that in spite of this there is no complete extension of feeling and pain. The author also makes a note of his intention to "amplify" this aspect of the play and in fact the manuscripts following "Analysis" show his revisions which include the correction of the previously used expression "for the moment" with "so far". This correction finds its justification in the presence of the past tense in the English text; in fact, "for the moment" in a past context would stand for "up to *that* moment" and this would not convey the idea that Mouth *still* fears the return of feeling. Now, when translating "so far" into French, Beckett had at least two options. "jusque-là", which can be used both in a present and past context, and "jusqu'à présent" which is more similar to "so far". He chooses "jusque-là" which seems a contradiction but is instead proof both of the complexity inherent in any translation process and of Beckett's capability to compensate his choice of using the present with other changes which ensure the preservation of important elements of the source text. In *Pas moi* Beckett was faced with the opposite need he had in *Not I*, he needed to stress that Bouche's present situation *was already* like this in April. In other words, using "so far" in the English text where the narrative intention is stressed, and "jusque-là" in the French text where the present context is emphasised, Beckett ensures that in both texts the fear of suffering belongs both to the past and to the present and this lasts throughout the performance. The two temporal adverbs, coupled respectively with "beam" and "rayon", have to remain unaltered, unaffected by the specific temporal context in which Mouth/Bouche uses them and have to refer precisely to the temporal level which is missing or not clearly expressed.

This example of the complexity of *Pas moi/Not I* exposes the problem of evaluating translations in all its complexity, and calls

into play the much discussed relationship between the original and the translated text I referred to at the beginning of this essay. "Original" is an adjective which is in itself a predicament of value which necessarily implies that a translation only exists as the attempt to reproduce the original work in another language and must be valued in terms of its adequacy, correctness and fidelity to the original. It is for this reason that I have avoided referring to *Not I* as the "original" work, and while necessarily relating the target text to the source text – thus reading *Pas moi* in the light of *Not I* – I have limited the discussion to the workings of Beckett's translation process. For example, had I stated, instead, that *Pas moi* should be granted a higher value than *Not I*, because it is the author's last "statement" on the play, the English version would have become the text to be measured and analysed in the light of the French text, and the comparison would very probably have concluded that Beckett "corrected" the previous text. As David J. Gordon points out, discussing the problem of textual authority with reference to Beckett's bilingualism:

We cannot assign a superior textual authority to either the French or the English version of one of Beckett's works. [...] Principles that might be invoked to support the superior authority of one or the other cancel each other out. If we try to argue that one version is more authoritative because it is original, then we face the argument that a reworking by the author should take precedence because it embodies his more recent intention. (164-165)

One might object that in carrying out the comparison I have favoured the source text anyway and indeed I do believe that the perspective from which one carries out a comparison necessarily implies the establishment of a sort of priority and authority of one item against which the other is measured. As a matter of fact, on many occasions I have used terms which are necessarily evaluative – "simplification", for instance – but I am convinced that the same would have happened, had I used the opposite perspective. And this is so because translation is a necessary and impossible task. As Derrida (1985) insists, translation is founded on its necessity as impossibility: all translations, not just

Beckett's. Following the French philosopher's view of the linguistic interchange in the translation process, *Pas moi* can be seen as the text which gives *Not I* what it lacks and gives it in a loving and harmonious way, as Benjamin put it (1923).

The same would happen, however, if one compared the English text to the French. Considered in this light *Pas moi* has filled a space that *Not I* had left empty but, by doing so, it has emptied a space that in *Not I* was full. Emphasizing the present situation of Bouche it has deemphasized Mouth's narrative. Must this be interpreted as the author's will to "correct" his previous work? What evidence do we have that Beckett valued his translation more highly? Certainly the first performance of *Pas moi* did not thrill him, nor did he make any change to the English text when *Not I* was adapted for television by the BBC (see Knowlson: 617 and 619-621). I therefore suggest that Beckett's translation of this difficult play is evidence of his desire for a better adaptation of his communicative process both to the average public and to the critics not simply because he made the play accessible to French speakers, nor merely because he experimented to see if the emphasis on the present would make the action of the play more obvious, but mainly because he set an example for possible translations of his theatrical work(s) in other languages. *Pas moi* is the invitation Beckett sent to his future translators not to be afraid of taking risky decisions during the translating process provided they do not diminish the complexity of his works to an undesirable extent. *Pas moi* is Beckett's invitation to his critics to keep in mind that the mere existence of *Pas moi* makes *Not I* become a text within which it resides or echoes. We face the beginning of intertextuality: *Pas moi* reveals aspects of *Not I* which were hidden or less explicit; *Not I* throws light on *Pas moi*.

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